



Federal Bureau of  
Investigation



Drug Enforcement  
Administration



Department of Homeland  
Security



U.S. Attorney's Office  
District of Arizona

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## **SONORA MAN CHARGED WITH LEADING CRIMINAL ENTERPRISE**

TUCSON – Three men have been arrested pursuant to a federal indictment that accuses them of leading an extensive criminal enterprise that smuggled tons of marijuana into the United States.

In November, a federal grand jury in Tucson returned a sealed three count indictment against Carlos Molinares-Nunez, aka “Caliche” and two other men. The indictment charges Molinares-Nunez with Continuing Criminal Enterprise. Molinares-Nunez and two other defendants - Luis Alfonso Carillo-Landavazo, aka “Penche” and Luis Carlos Quijada-Soto, aka “Cartero” - were also charged with Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute Marijuana.

U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona Paul K. Charlton stated: “Molinares-Nunez are suspected of leading an extensive drug trafficking organization that moved narcotics across the border into American communities. I am grateful to the continuing coordinated efforts of federal and local law enforcement agencies, who are dedicated to dismantling such ongoing criminal enterprises.”

The indictment was the result of a three year investigation into the Molinares-Nunez Drug Trafficking Organization (MDTO) by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Bisbee Police Department. “Operation Vanquish” resulted in the seizure of thousands of pounds of marijuana attributable to MDTO.

“Today, we have taken another important step in our fight against drug trafficking,” said DEA Special Agent in Charge Timothy J. Landrum. “‘Operation Vanquish’ identified and dismantled a violent criminal enterprise responsible for smuggling and distributing multi-ton loads of marijuana into Southern Arizona.”

“ICE is committed to working closely with our law enforcement partners at all levels to combat the scourge of drug smuggling,” said Phoenix ICE Special Agent in Charge Alonzo Peña. “This sophisticated illegal operation underscores the importance of addressing border security comprehensively. We must look not only at the borders themselves, but also at our nation's interior, and at the modes and methods used by criminals who attempt to harm our communities.”

FBI Phoenix Division Special Agent in Charge John E. Lewis stated, “The frequency of assaults along the border and specifically against Border Patrol agents is to some extent driven by violent drug organizations protecting their shipments. The FBI is privileged to work alongside its long-time partners DEA and ICE in such investigations and appreciates the opportunity to work with these agencies in dismantling this significant drug trafficking organization.”

“We are pleased to have been involved in this investigation from its inception through the end,” said Chief James Elkins, Bisbee Police Department. “We feel that the end results are a positive impact for Bisbee as well as the surrounding communities. We feel that the thousands of man hours spent was well worth it to make our Community safer and to make a significant impact in the illicit drug trade.”

Molinares-Nunez was arrested in Tucson on December 9, 2006, following extensive surveillance. The second defendant named in the indictment - Luis Alfonso Carillo-Landavazo, aka “Penche,” is believed to be an upper-level manager for the MDTO. He was arrested in Phoenix on December 11, 2006. Luis Carlos Quijada-Soto, aka “Cartero,” a Mexican citizen and the third individual named in the indictment, was arrested on December 11, 2006, at the Douglas Port of Entry.

At a detention hearing held December 14<sup>th</sup> in Tucson, U.S. Magistrate Bernardo Velasco ordered Carillo-Landavazo and Quijada-Soto remain detained. A detention hearing for Molinares-Nunez is set for December 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m.

A conviction for Continuing Criminal Enterprise carries a maximum penalty of life in prison, a \$2,000,000 fine or both. A conviction for Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute 1,000 kilograms or more of Marijuana carries a maximum sentence of life in prison. In determining an actual sentence, the judge will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

An indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The prosecution is being handled by Bradley Giles, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson.

CASE NUMBER: CR-06-1955-TUC  
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